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Mount Wilson's Soliloquy

BY

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Mount Wilson's Soliloquy.

HERE have I firmly stood for many ages,
And gazed upon Life's ever-changing stream,
That, daily passing with a hasty motion,
Has seemed so like a long-continued dream.

Here have I stood, a guardian of the valley
That stretches near my feet in peaceful rest,
Which ever hath, by the Divine Creator,
With Nature's richest offerings been blest.

Far in the distant past, where mists are falling
That hide the scenes of life from mortal ken,
Down through a narrow pass, into the valley,
Wandered a lonely band of red-faced men.

From whence they came and when, men may keep guessing,
No thought have I this secret to reveal,
For 'tis the will of Providence that, never,
Should I tell of those things he would conceal.

As time passed by, they lived in wild contentment,—
  In their rude way supplied their simple wants;
They basked beneath the sunshine in the valley,
  But sometimes sought my solitary haunts.

When many years had thus passed in succession,
  To turn them from their rude and simple ways,
Into the valley came the Mission Fathers,
  And taught the love of Christ for many days.

The prudent Fathers, from the far-off Southland,
  Along with them brought flocks of lazy sheep,
That they might feed upon the plenteous grasses
  That clothed the valley and the hillsides steep.

Horses they also brought as well as cattle,
  For they were provident in many ways;
And in the valley it was their intention
  To build their homes, and live for many days.

They chose their grounds — closed them with cactus fences,
  And turned the limpid waters from their course,
And made them flow in rude-constructed ditches,
  Down to new gardens, from their lasting source.

The Fathers taught the Indians simple lessons,
  Such as their childish minds could comprehend,
And how to them, of her rich stores, their Mother,
  With proper asking, would a portion lend.

They labored, then, within the cactus fences,
  And planted grapes, pomegranates, palms, and limes;
Nor did they leave the orange trees omitted,
  That yield their golden fruit in southern climes.

And many other trees they also planted;
  And in the fertile soil they sowed the seed,
That they might gather, at the time of harvest,
  The ripened grain, against an hour of need.

Upon the chosen ground they built the church-walls
  Of the red bricks they had but newly made,
Which one by one, with layers of white mortar,
  Were firmly in their proper places laid.

The walls completed, and the building covered,
  Then were the bells, that came from far away,
Raised up and hung in their respective places
  Where some of them may yet be seen today.

Inside, and also out, the walls were plastered;
Through narrow windows passed the rays of light;
And, to the Indians that had been converted,
The hallowed mission was a welcome sight.

Near by a house was built for the good Fathers;
The Indians' homes were seen not far away;
Unto the church they went at hour of vespers,
When evening shades proclaimed the close of day.

On Sundays also, and in early morning,
Floated the silvery tones far off in air,
Calling the wandering ones back to the mission
To pay their tribute to the Lord in prayer.

As years rolled by, they tended to the orchards,
And pruned the vineyards at the proper time,
And watched the flocks of sheep and herds of cattle
Daily increasing in their sunny clime.

But it was not ordained that the good Fathers
Should always teach the children of their fold,
For those who with them came into the valley
Thought less of Christian love and more of gold;

And, in obedience to their evil thinking,
Sought how they might, by subtle means, obtain
Possession of the flocks and herds the Fathers
Had labored patiently for years to gain.

From those in power, who then ruled o'er their nation,
They first obtained large tracts of fertile land;
Some lying close beside the lofty mountains,
Others near by the rolling ocean's strand.

On these they soon had many sheep and cattle,
And should have been contented with their lot,
And left the Fathers to rule o'er the mission,
For then their fame would have been darkened not.

But Avarice is a sly thief, that stealeth
Into the secret chambers of the mind,
That he may lead men from the paths of virtue,
And firmly round them iron fetters bind.

It was decreed, by those who ruled the nation,
That longer should the Fathers not remain,
And teach the love of Christ unto the Indians,
With whom their labor had not been in vain.

Grand followers of this world's greatest Teacher!
They scattered far the glorious truth divine;
They left their native lands to serve their Saviour,
Who bid them teach his love to all mankind.

But, driven from their homes and from the mission,
They left the fields where they had labored long,
With naught of this world's treasure in their keeping,
And yet their voices rose to Heaven in song.

Ere long, their gardens by rude hands were wasted;
Their flocks and herds to others fell a prey;
The waters ceased to flow down to the orchards—
The hand of time soon turned them to decay.

The Spaniards built their low-roofed haciendas,
Which sheltered them from the descending rain;
At other times, enrobed in glittering raiment,
They galloped gaily o'er the sunny plain.

The dark-eyed senoritas often gathered
Beneath some friendly roof or spreading tree,
And with their lovers, in the mazy dances,
Passed many hours of merriment and glee.

Just o'er the hills that lie beyond San Gabriel,
To turn the evil from their ways of guilt,
Where now afar the Angel City stretches,
A quaint cathedral had the faithful built.

Near the cathedral had the Spaniards gathered,
And built their homes of rude adobe brick;
No ample grounds were seen around their houses,
But near the Plaza were they clustered thick.

The Spaniards, much to their surprise, one morning,
Beheld the noble Pathfinder encamped,
With his brave soldiers, close beside the city;
Then in their hearts a sudden fear was stamped.

The war that followed was of short duration,
For to the strong the weak one quickly yields;—
Soon, as a part of Uncle Sam's great nation,
The starry emblem waved o'er mission fields.

Then, slowly, from the east, as flows a streamlet—
From the far east, whence comes the rising sun,
Into the valley that before me stretches
Came many Saxon children one by one.

The Spaniards yielded part of their possessions,
The Indians part of their few stores of life;
Thus, to the valley were the strangers welcomed,
And more than one soon found a dusky wife.

'Twas then, near by the Little Santa 'Nita,
The winding trail that leads up to my crest
Was made, by rolling the loose rocks and bowlders
Down to the brooklet, o'er my rugged breast.

Then, from my sides and from my lofty summit,
They cut the cedars and the stately pines,
And sawed and split them into posts and shingles
To build them barns, and fences round their vines.

As each year passed, with plows, the new invaders
Turned under the wild grasses, that they might
Set vines and trees, where once the lonely herdsman
Tended his flocks until the fall of night.

When the slow years had turned a few more cycles,
Down from the north they laid a winding track;
Ere long the iron horse sped through the valley,
While wreaths of smoke hung o'er the long train's back.

Then, to the vale and to the Angel City
The lazy riders came in bright array;
With each succeeding train they came still faster,
Intending in this pleasant land to stay.

The Angel City grew, and Pasadena
Made rapid inroads on the arid land;
And, looking right and left from my high station,
I saw new towns spring up on every hand;—

Spring up and grow as if some magic power,
Invisible, but real, was lying near;
There was a power—that of speculation
Propelled them far beyond their proper sphere.

Contented not with building in the valley,
Some ventured higher than the surging throng,
And, with intent to build their habitations
Above the fog line, pressed the trail along.

And others came along the winding pathway,
With many trappings and huge iron bars,
And, firmly placing them upon my summit,
Took pictures of the snowy fields of Mars.

And now men whisper, as beneath the pine-trees
They idly while the summer hours away,
That up my rugged side an iron railway
Will be constructed at an early day ;

And that, ere long, up to the endless heavens,
Of all yet formed, will turn the mightiest eye
To probe still further into God's creations—
To search the secrets of the vaulted sky.

The sons of men, those transient human beings,
Climb up the winding pathway to my crest,
For better far than at the lazy sea-side
Can they spend here their wonted hours of rest.

They watch the glorious twilight disappearing,
As the dark shadows, draperies of night,
Do slowly fall around the land and ocean
As falls a snow-flake in its silent flight.

They pass away the soft, still hours of evening
By telling tales and whispering words of love,
While mellow light steals through the lofty pine-trees
From the bright stars, far in the heavens above.

Many a one, when the bright day is dawning,
With renewed vigor leaves a restful bed,
And ventures forth to see the sun ascending,
With mien majestic, o'er Old Baldy's head;

And, when the fog rolls in from the wide ocean,
They watch it falling backward from the lea,
So like the floating ice upon the river
As it sweeps on towards the mighty sea.

For hours they gaze upon the fertile valleys
That stretch afar to east, to south, to west,
And out upon the ever-restless ocean,
Watching the vessels plying o'er his crest.

They sit and gaze as if spell-bound with wonder,
At the grand scene for which they pay no price,
And then break forth with wild ejaculations—
Surely this is the Vale of Paradise!

Far westward in the vale of San Fernando
The fields, in summer, wave with harvests white.
While o'er the hills, a little to the southward,
The home of the brave soldiers looms in sight,

On many a gory field they faced the onsets
Of their swift foes — amidst the leaden hail,
While hellish shells went screaming forth their accents,
And deep-toned cannons echoed o'er the vale.

They hear no more the clamor of the battle;
They hear no more their comrades' moving cheers;
But by their valor lives their glorious nation —
In peace should they spend their declining years.

Fair Santa Monica lies farther southward,
And there, as at Redondo and Long Beach,
The daring bathers often venture outward
Until the bottom is beyond their reach.

The tiny bathers, the barefooted children,
Delight to pass away the hours of day
By dancing merrily among the ripples
Old Ocean tosses round them as they play.

The white-armed lasses face the rolling breakers,—
Oh, how delightfully round them they beat!
Alas! how treacherous the saucy Ocean
When a huge breaker takes them off their feet!

Their toes are seen above the foaming waters;
  Their hands are grappling with the sandy bed;
And, after trying to swallow half the ocean,
  Each one succeeds in popping up her head.

The portly dames, they choose a safe position,—
  How valiantly they with the breakers cope!
For, wiser than the young and giddy maidens,
  They hold the fort by holding to a rope.

The lads, how brave! they swim beyond the breakers
  To show fair ones their manly strength and skill,—
How suddenly they leave the angry waters
  With strength exhausted and a conquered will!

Around Point Fermin, further to the eastward,
  San Pedro nestles close beside the bay,
Fondly expecting, in an ample harbor,
  To welcome sailors at an early day.

The yachts, at times, beyond the placid harbor,
  Are wont to venture forth with sails unfurled,
While out beyond the entrance lie at anchor
  The stately ships, that have passed round the world.

The smaller crafts do oft, in imitation,
Bear the gay picnicers beyond the bay;
But many, when they reach the rolling waters,
Bid a farewell to pleasures of the day.

Farther beyond, some distance in the ocean,
The isle of Catalina can be seen
When the bright sun, high in the heavens arising,
Has drawn aside the gray and misty screen.

Oh, how transparent are the placid waters!
Happy, indeed, the bathers seem to be,
For, safely sheltered by the friendly island,
They're not tormented by the treacherous sea!

The fishermen, with fond anticipations,
Cast forth their silken lines into the main;
And, though the fortunate are well rewarded,
The luckless only wait and watch in vain.

Upon their native rocks, in the warm sunlight,
Others prefer to see the noisy seals,—
Now gamboling about in sportive pleasure,
Now each into the dashing waters kneels.

Far back towards the north, the Angel City
  Stretches her form as if in calm repose;
There, are the homes of many happy children;
  There, in profusion blooms the beauteous rose.

Each day, new buildings mark her onward progress;
  Each day, new faces on her streets are seen;
Of all the cities in this land of sunshine,
  She merits best the title of Fair Queen.

Industrious are her sons and quite ambitious,
  Daily each one his own advancement seeks;
And, though their methods may remain unquestioned,
  Some are, at times, moved by peculiar freaks.

The county court-house towers towards the heavens;
  The city hall stands on a goodly site;
But who can tell why they have built their school-house
  Where goblins chase among the graves at night?

What dwarf is that which stood so long unfinished,
  And finally took form by stern command?
To keep alive the memory of a statesman,
  Some say that it is destined long to stand.

It may be Uncle Sam was short of treasure:
If so, he should have raised the tariffs higher;
To keep abreast the city and the county,
Along progression's path, he should aspire.

A little further north lies Pasadena,
With many handsome homes, and daughters fair;
Each one, obedient to the voice of Nature,
Aspires to be one of a wedded pair.

Upon a sunny slope Sierra Madre
Nestles in sweet contentment, at my feet.
Her sons are wont to tend their vines and orchards;
Around their tasty homes are gardens neat.

Off to the east, the Duarte and Azusa,
Though not as noisy as some others are,
Of luscious fruits produce an ample portion,
And to the far-off East ship many a car.

Southward from them, towards the rolling ocean,
The town of Whittier boasts of a school,
Where wayward youths receive prescribed corrections,
For violations of the golden rule.

While parents teach their children, by example,
The subtle tricks by which they hope to gain
Large stores of wealth and many wide possessions,
The want of the reform-school will remain.

Not far removed, but in the sandy bottom,
Is Los Nietos, where are fertile fields;
There, Mother Earth, of corn, an ample portion,
Each summer, to the hardy farmers yields;

While off towards the east, some distance from her,
In a new county, chief among her towns,
Is Anaheim and happy Santa Ana,
Where the good harvest and much fruit abounds.

Northward from them is seen the fair Pomona,
Named from a goddess of the ancient times,
Who made the trees bend low beneath their burdens
Of ripened fruits, in far-off eastern climes.

On to the east, beyond the Santa Ana,
Is Riverside, home of the golden fruit;
The anxious lover there 'neath orange blossoms,
With beating heart, is wont to press his suit.

She, like Pomona, to a high tribunal
Carried her claim to be a county-seat;
Anxious, each one, to have a new-built court-house —
Alas! their hopes soon withered in defeat.

I wonder if they bore in mind the proverb,
"That with the law-makers men choose of late,
When placed beside good reasons and sound logic,
The yellow gold has far the greater weight."

Northward from her, towards the pine-clad mountains,
San Bernardino in the valley lies —
Not first, 'tis true, among the many cities
That now are seen beneath our azure skies;

But, moved by the true spirit of progression,
A higher place she fairly seeks to gain;
And, to her purpose firmly now adhering,
The end desired she surely will attain.

Beneath the Arrow-head, upon the Highlands,
An ample home is built for the insane;
All people in the Golden State will answer,—
"I have no need an entrance there to gain."

But if those who, when in the Law's firm clutches,
Do play so readily the insane dodge
Should all succeed in their false, knavish pleadings
Not one in twelve could in the asylum lodge.

On to the east, far in the hazy distance,
Where the long valley meets the rising hills,
A town, though young, yet lusty and ambitious,
Believes this proverb, "Success to him that wills."

And many other towns are in the valley,
Each one contented with its happy lot;
And all the people in them will give answer,—
"Others are good, but this is the best spot."

Ye sons of men, 'tis well to be ambitious!
'Tis well to gather wealth and to be wise!
But why do ye persist in telling strangers,
With a good store of truth, some little lies?

"In union there is strength" is a true proverb,
Which ye should all keep constantly in mind;
Then each will help the other through Life's path-way,
And easier far the journey all will find.

Abundantly her blessings have been lavished,
By Nature, on this fair and fertile land,
For countless stores of her most valued treasures,
In latent form, are waiting man's command.

Locked in the rock-ribbed hills are gold and silver,
And other minerals to serve his needs,
While long the fertile valleys have invited
His hand to sow therein life-giving seeds —

Life-giving seeds from whence the grain and grasses,
Also the tall and widely spreading trees,
As well as plants whose many-tinted blossoms
Yield the sweet nectar to the busy bees.

Then sow the seeds, and make the valleys blossom,
Make them appear as one continued grove,
And make your homes in beauty stand unrivalled
By those in distant lands through which you rove.

In southern lands art had its earliest dawning;
In southern lands the greatest masters wrought;
So, in this sunny land, your sons and daughters
Should gather laurels in the fields of thought.

So idle not away the passing moments,
  But strive each day some golden truths to learn;
Then, like the seers and the departed sages,
  A lasting diadem ye too may earn.

But I will firmly stand for many ages,
  And watch the changing stream of Life pass by;
The lazy sheep may leave the fertile valley,
  The eagles o'er my crest may cease to fly:

But as the mists, arising from the waters,
  Drift far away from the Old Ocean's foam
To fall in gentle rain-drops on the landscape,
  And then roll back into their native home,

So from the elements will men keep coming
  To fill their wonted place for a few years;
But they must mingle with the dust of ages,
  When they are laid to rest "with many tears."

They may keep planting trees and tending vineyards,
  And make the valley as a garden fair;
They may climb to my crest to view the ocean,
  To gather vigor from my bracing air;

But I will stand, a guardian of the valley
That stretches near my feet in peaceful rest,
Which ever will, by the Divine Creator,
With Nature's richest offerings be blest.

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